



Trauma-Informed Considerations for Anti-Trafficking Efforts in the COVID-19 Environment, its Aftermath, and in the Context of Possible Future Pandemics



★★★ High-Level Best Practices ★★★

While all anti-trafficking efforts should be trauma-informed, it is especially important that anti-trafficking efforts during a pandemic apply a trauma-informed approach. The following is a series of recommendations to achieve safety, transparency, mutual self-help, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness to address pandemic-related barriers. While the COVID-19 pandemic warrants special consideration, what has been helpful prior to the pandemic is clearly even more important now.

- ★ Designate identification, intervention, and investigation efforts for victims of trafficking as essential activities during and after any public health crisis or state of emergency.
- ★ Prioritize the proactive identification of victims of trafficking who are exploited online due to ongoing trends toward online exploitation, including sex trafficking victimization and exploitative recruitment for labor trafficking. ¹
- ★ Ensure safety through adequate funding for and production and equitable distribution of personal protective equipment for essential sectors that may be at-risk of trafficking, as well as for service providers in congregate care and other service delivery settings that increase the risk of virus transmission.
- ★ Support equity regarding communications about and access to safe and effective vaccinations among at-risk communities. ²
- ★ Maintain streamlined, consistent, and accessible information at the federal, state, and local levels through coordinated sharing of data related to the status of infection rates, health emergencies, and public health recommendations. Provide opportunities for future, evidence-based decisions in coordinated community response efforts.
- ★ Prioritize funding interventions that support social and economic equity and sustainability for marginalized groups, including women, children, and individuals from racial or ethnic minority communities, who are disproportionately affected by trafficking. Because of such populations' increased experience of inequity, marginalization, and violence, they are more likely to have been impacted by a public health crisis.



- ★ Support immigration relief and voluntary repatriation for foreign national victims whose vulnerabilities were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ★ Train all health care staff who interact with patients (with priority for emergency medical providers and vaccine administrators) to use effective screening tools for human trafficking and respond appropriately to those who have experienced human trafficking or are at risk. ³

These considerations were developed by consultants for the Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network funded by the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The purpose of the Network is to engage experts, particularly those with lived experience of human trafficking, to provide expertise and input on Department of State anti-trafficking policies, strategies, and products. The authors, Megan Lundstrom and Jennifer Roman-Martin, have a range of expertise related to human trafficking, marginalized communities, service provision, and trauma.



Acknowledgements

- 1 UN Women. Guidance: Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic. p.37
- 2 Physicians for Human Rights (2021). Vaccine Distribution: Ethics and Human Rights Considerations. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEjEBziko-o>
- 3 American Nurses Association (2019). <https://www.nursingworld.org/news/news-releases/2019-news-releases/membership-assembly-news-for-members>/<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/training/soar-health-and-wellness-training/soar-online>

